ANIMA CHRISTI

Practical Meditations on the Prayer of St. Ignatius.

By

H. BAXTER LIEBLER

THE CATHOLIC CHURCHMAN PRESS
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The Prayer of St. Ignatius

Anima Christi, Sanctifica me
Corpus Christi, Salva me
Sanguis Christi, Inebria me
Aqua lateris Christi, Lava me
Passio Christi, Conforta me
O Bone Jesu, Exaudi me
Intra tua vulnera absconde me
Ne permittas me separari a te
Ab hoste maligno defende me
In hora mortis mei voca me
Et jube me venire ad te
Ut cum Sanctis tuis laudem te
In saecula saeculorum. Amen.

This Book is Dedicated
To All To Whom
I Have Been Permitted
To Minister.

I.

Soul of Christ, Sanctify Me.

1

"SOUL of Christ, sanctify me," cried the Saint of old.

"Self-realization through self-expression," calmly announces the liberal of today.

For some reason or other it seems easy to add those two words "of old" to the word Saint. In olden times there were saints. There is a glamour about the somber-robed figure moving in and out among men in leather jerkins or chain-mail. But while we look back through romance-rosed glasses at the past, we actually harbor no more desire to be the somber-robed saint than to be the mail-clad knight.

The modern mind is not satisfied with "Trial by Combat" as a means of settling private quarrels or public justice. Nor does it care to cringe before a Crucifix for the sake of making peace with God.

There is an element of sportsmanship, which we are compelled to admire, in the attitude of the modern man towards sin and forgiveness. "I'll play the game," says he, and if he has done wrong, he stands ready to pay the penalty, and where he has done right, he claims the advantage.

The sad part is that he doesn't understand the game. He understands all other games—in field or stream, following the hounds or driving the white pill—but the game of Reality, the game of our relations to our Creator—he hasn't studied, and he is under the greatest of handicaps. He doesn't know the tools and he doesn't know the goal. How can he play the game?

2

Some sportsmen refuse to use a shotgun under any circumstances. It is not sportsmanlike to use a weapon which scatters its missiles in so wide a circle that the game has no chance to escape. But, he is told, a duck jumps or dives when he sees the flash of a rifle, and would be gone before the bullet hit. Very

well, then, we will use a shotgun for ducks and other quick fowl, but a rifle for rabbits and squirrels.

Yet where is the sportsmanship in annihilating a helpless rabbit with any fire arm? Are the chances even? Is it true sport? Then use a bow and arrow. But even that is an unequal match. An armed man against an unarmed rabbit—no. Then you must go after him with your bare hands to play the game as true sportsman.

Or in the stream. Hooks? Flies? These are unfair advantages, devised by the ingenuity of man to prey upon the stupid fish. No, the real sportsman must go after his trout with his hands, in a bathing suit.

Likewise the sportsman refuses driver, mashie, brassie or putter, and insists upon throwing the golf-ball with his hands over the fairway, and kicking it when on the green.

And so we might go on with this mad catalogue of impossible sportsmen. They never existed, of course. The true sportsman, the one we meet in the woods and on the links, has his rules and sticks to them; he plays a game which is hard, but possible. He uses tools which bring success within his reach, but which do not guarantee it. For the rest he looks to his own skill.

Is not the modern attitude toward religion like that of the impossible mad sportsman we have considered? God knows the game is hard enough to play with all the weapons available; it is impossible without them.

3

There must be a reason why the modern mind is sensible in other games, but all awry in the great Game of Life. And the reason is that he doesn't know the goal.

"Soul of Christ, sanctify me," was the saint's aspiration. Kneeling at his hand-carved prie-dieu, he knew both the game and the means. Sanctification, the goal; the Soul of Christ the only possible means.

So in our foolish wisdom of today we scorn the object for which we were made and the means of attaining it.

Perhaps the reason people don't care to try to be holy today is the fear of being accused of being holier than some one else. Hypocrisy is so vile and contemptible a thing, that men prefer the loathsome state of sin to the possibility of being exposed to an accusation of hypocrisy.

Yet hypocrisy is to holiness as bluff is to success, as swindling

is to honest business. Good men do not avoid wealth for fear of being thought profiteers or bootleggers.

Man has a higher destiny than merely to go through life with as few infringements of the Ten Commandments as is consistent with reasonable comfort. "Holiness, without which no man shall see God"—no less than this is his goal. And it is a goal not merely reserved for the "magna cum laude" graduates of the School of Life, but (if we may be permitted a flowing change of metaphor) a prerequisite to any sort of graduation at all.

Men today think of Christ as an interesting figure who taught certain valuable truths, which may be profitably taken (with reservations) as the rule of one's life.

In reality Christ is the Incarnation of God who took a human Soul, and sanctified it that he might sanctify men through union with Himself.

Soul of Christ, sanctify me! In that cry we have the answer to the riddle of life.

II.

Body of Christ, Save Me.

1

"Body of Christ," the Saint dared to say, "Body of Christ, save me."

Today it takes more courage to echo the prayer. We live in an age when spiritual people would ignore the body, be it Christ's or our own. Only the Catholic religion has maintained the true balance between body and soul, and avoided the pitfalls that await the materialist who can see no further than the body and the ultra-spiritual philosopher who believes that no carnal sin can affect his soul.

The one would perhaps say, "I have a soul;" the other would say, "I am a soul; I have a body;" the Catholic says, "I am a man, composed of body and soul."

For present purposes, neither body nor soul alone is useful. The former may be used for anatomical study and the latter may wander through Elysian fields, but for the job of living, which confronts us, the combination is the essential thing. As in the world of commerce and finance, brains, capital and labor are the three legs of a stool which cannot stand if any of them be withdrawn, so man, from conception to death, is body and soul. Even the mystic, deep in ecsatic contemplation, is working upon his body, just as the most mechanical labor of the hands leaves an effect upon the soul.

All our perceptions are received in some way through some function of the body. God knew this before modern psychology presented it in scientific language, and that is why He took a human Body as the medium of His revelation to man, and that is why we today can cry with the saint, "Body of Christ, save me."

Years ago a learned and holy Bishop wrote a marvellous treatise on "Why God Became Man." His language and ideas were far from those of the modern mind, but the Prayer we are considering gives the answer in two words: "Save me." God took a Body that He might save me.

For centuries God had tried to get His Word to mankind through prophets. But the medium, we may say with perfect reverance, was inadequate to the greatness of the task, and man didn't really know God until God learned to talk man's language. This explains some of the strange, even repulsive, ideas reflected in the Old Testament. Not that the Old Testament is not truly the Word of God—it is, most assuredly, but the Word had great difficulty "getting through," as the spiritualists say. The New Testament suffers from a similar defect, but infinitely lesser in degree, yet at best it is a collection of human records (albeit inspired) of the life and utterances of the God-Man.

The Body of Christ became a fact that the Word of God might be revealed to man. But that was far from exhausting the purpose of the Incarnation.

Man will probably never, this side of Paradise, have the remotest idea of how the Death of Christ could atone for the sins of the world. Men may write volumes about it—they do, in fact—but the enlightening effect is negligible. It is a thing that passes human knowledge, and must be taken on faith. But this much we can and do know, and the more we meditate upon it the more and the better we know it: that the Death of Christ, so willingly and so meekly suffered by one who held the power of life and death in the hollow of His hand, presents to the mind of man the only conceivable measure of the love of God for man. The Crucifixion must ever remain a challenge to our love. "This is how much God cares," it says to all who pass by.

By shedding the life-blood, the Body of Christ saves us.

2

Theologians talk about the natural Body of Christ, the mystical Body of Christ, and the sacramental Body of Christ. The distinctions are only words to most of us, but they really mean something. It was the natural Body of Christ which suffered for us and saved us. But that hard-to-understand thing is more widely appreciated among many Christians than the more easily comprehended function of Christ's mystical Body.

Every one who reads modern writings on religion is familiar with the type of piety which admires our divine Lord and scorns the Church, with her "out-worn creeds, meaningless ceremonies, intolerant dogmas." Nor can we be impatient with this sort of person until he has been forced to see that the reciter of creeds, the performer of ceremonies and the believer in dogmas is also the most honest, candid, trustworthy and loving soul in the world. He has not been forced to see this; in fact, many do not suspect that it is usually, or even sometimes, the case. In the meantime,

however, it may not be amiss for us to consider how indispensable to the religious life of the world has been the Church, the mystical Body of Christ.

Without it, the very records of the life and teachings of the Founder of Christianity must have perished in the ferocious upheaval of the decadent civilization of ancient Rome which marks the dividing line bttween what we term Ancient History and Mediæval History. In those days it was the Church, the despised Church, yea, that most despised of all institutions of the Church, monasticism, which saved for future generations the sacred Books of Christianity, along with those of Israel, and the classics of pagan Greece and Rome. Were there no Church, there would be no knowledge of Christ.

But that mystical Body is more than an historic thing; it is a fellowship. It means all that a community association means, and much, much more. It gives us precious examples of the life lived in God's grace, and it gives more than that: it gives us God's grace. Yes, the much despised Church is the means of our salvation. The mystical Body of Christ saves us.

3

For it is only through the Church that the sacramental Body of Christ comes to us. To be sure, He might have planned it in another way. He might have arranged that something equivalent to sacramental grace should be bestowed in some wholesale fashion upon men, or made it dependent upon some sort of physical condition. But he didn't. When He uttered that discourse recorded in the sixth chapter of St. John, He was telling of what He was going to do; when He gathered His disciples after the Last Supper, and had blessed the bread and the wine, He did it. And today, as we kneel at the altar rail, His priest, obedient to His command, brings to us—ignoring such details as time and space, for these have no existence in the Mind of God—that same Body, to save us.

How, we do not know. But we can learn something from human analogies.

A boy goes wrong. "He was a good boy," his mother says, "but he got into bad company. Weak, you know."

That's it. Company—contact, the more educated person would perhaps say. Human contacts are for good or for evil, for broadening or for narrowing. Who has not seen a sweet nature become sour from much listening to the worthless chatter of some embittered being? And who has not been inspired to greater efforts through contact with a truly noble soul? The

weaker we are, the more we are susceptible to the influence of these contacts. A haughty spirit might have resisted the souring influence; it would also have failed to find the inspiration. Was it some such thought that our Lord wanted to convey to St. Paul when He said, "My strength is made perfect in weakness?"

Certainly it is true that he who comes to meet the Body of Christ in the Holy Sacrament with a spirit of self-sufficiency and a sense of unimprovable righteousness can gain little from the contact. "The rich He hath sent empty away."

"That our bodies may be made clean by His Body . . . . "

III.

Blood of Christ, Inebriate Me.

1

There are some who would criticize the use of the word "inebriate" in a prayer addressed to God. Its unfortunate association with alcoholic intoxication is enough to bring it into bad repute.

Yet it is a fact that on the day of Pentecost the appearance and action of the disciples who had received the Holy Ghost led to the suspicion of drunkenness. There is undoubtedly a marked resemblance, in some respects, between the stimulation derived from fellowship with our Lord and that resulting from an injudicious use of fermented liquor. The upholders of staid and soberly respectable religion are particularly advised to meditate upon this revolting fact.

More than once it has been pointed out that alcohol is in reality not a stimulant, but a depressant. It does not make men merry, but it deadens the restraint which normally keeps men forgetful of the duty or pleasure of being gay. When a police force is removed from a community which has been held in check, the result is riot. Alcohol removes the restraint which civilization or convention or training or resolution has put upon a man, and the result is a release of the formerly restrained impulses. "In vino veritas" is an often-quoted statement, and it embodies a truth. You can get the truth out of a drunken man. When a drunken man becomes abusive, we say he is not responsible, and overlook the abuse. In reality, we should take it the more to heart, because then alone speaks the unrestrained man. If you want to know what a man really thinks of you, get him drunk, and arouse his anger!

Inebriation, then, means the stripping off of restraint, and the baring of the real man. It is to accomplish this revelation in us that we invoke the Blood of Christ, so freely shed for us.

And the real man, freed from sin through the Blood of Christ, is happy, gay. The contemplation of the Passion of Christ wrings from him tears of sorrow, bitter in proportion to his appreciation of the loathsomeness of his sin; but while tears and sorrow may endure for a night, joy cometh in the morning.

The joy of a Christian is not the result of blinding himself to the sorrow in the world, or that in his own heart. It comes from viewing all facts upon this earth in the light of the greater fact that God cares. And the proof that He cares lies in the shedding of His Blood.

It is one of the eternal paradoxes of the Christian religion that the joys of Christians flow from Christ's and their own sufferings. The saints who have most clearly shown forth the spirit of holy joy are those who have been most deeply devoted to the sufferings of our Lord, and have followed them most closely. Of course, the paramount instance is St. Francis of Assisi. He who was content to be the *jongleur de Dieu*—not even the *troubadour*—he who sang his Provençal love-songs in honour of his joyous Lady Poverty, and shared the happiness of the birds of the air and the beasts of the field, he it was who, wrapped in deepest contemplation upon Mount Alverno, was called to share the sufferings of the Crucified, and from that moment to the day of his death, a few weeks later, lived a living death, with bleeding hands and feet and side. The Blood of Christ inebriated him all his life with the spirit of irrepressible joy, and he crowned that life of joy when he breathed forth his soul from his naked body, lying on a bare floor. That inebriation began on the day when he cast restraint to the winds, even as the inebriation of the sot begins when he decides that another drink won't hurt him. The one leads to a joyous heaven on earth, the other to a veritable hell on earth. It is significant that in the Franciscan rosary the meditations are all on joyful or glorious mysteries. At the same time, the Stations of the Cross, a Franciscan devotion, is one which brings most vividly to our minds the sufferings of our Lord. And to the same holy man we owe the Christmas crib. How wonderfully St. Francis understood holy joy, not as a phase of Christian life, but as something that pervades it all through, and that comes to us from the inebriation of the Blood that was shed for us on the Cross.

IV.

Water from the Side of Christ, Wash Me.

1

One of the things the Incarnation has given us is a picture of the kind of man God meant us to be. Christ has shown us a God-like life, and together with the picture He has granted us an inspiration which makes us want to imitate it.

Many people remember feeling something of a shock on first hearing of Thomas A. Kempis' book, "The Imitation of Christ." As little children they had been taught that it was naughty to imitate, and a sense of reverance would make infinitely wicked any effort to do what the title of the book seemed to suggest. Of course, the prohibition to which, as children, we were subjected, was due to a mischievous sort of imitation which today would be called "taking off." It is to no less a thing than the imitation of Christ that the arresting figure of the Man of Nazareth calls us.

The first thing, perhaps, to attract us in the character of Christ is His cleanliness, together with His strength. The "big, clean, strong man" has a right place in the favor of the galleries, in the hearts of movie-fans. The blasé will smile at his popularity, the while envying it. The really ludicrous feature of the modern situation is the fact that too often the character is laid aside as soon as the curtain falls or the camera ceases to click. In the Divine Man the thoroughness, the genuineness of it all cries out for instant recognition, and receives it.

When a man begins to think at all seriously of the imitation of Christ, his first impetuosity is dashed against the blunt realization of unworthiness. "I cannot be like this Man, in the purity of His soul—I who am defiled with every conceivable stain."

Among the first recorded words of our Lord's public ministry are those of the first Beatitude, which at once meet this problem.

2

"Blessed are the pure in heart" is an inadequate translation, if the Greek version is reliable. Rather did our Lord say, "Blessed

are the cleansed in heart." The word contains all the ideas of purgation, of careful, perhaps painful cleansing. Virgin souls, to be sure, have never merited our Lord's displeasure; but it is certain that He felt His mission to be rather to the lost. He came to purify by water and blood.

Students of mysticism have always recognized at least three clear stages in the mystical life—by which we mean the life of union with God. The last we shall have occasion to refer to on another occasion, but the first, the stage of purgation, is clearly associated with the cleansing waters from the side of Christ.

Were it not for sin, there would be no such thing as the study of mysticism, in its understood sense, for union between God and Man would be a matter of course. Sin has made the return to the normal condition of things difficult. Sin requires purgation.

All this sounds very harsh and severe, as it would be save for the water from the side of Christ.

3

Our Lord has met us more than half way. The earthly teacher says to his pupil, "Do this, thus," and expects the pupil to imitate us. Our Lord has said, "Learn of Me," but has given us more than a mere pattern—He has given us the means whereby we may follow, be it at however so great a distance, in His footsteps.

The Mystical Way, in all its technical and obscure ramifications, is not the ordinary approach of man to God. This is a far simpler thing. God has done much—nearly all, but not quite all. He has done as much as He could do without forcing us. For if there is one thing which God apparently does not want it is the unwilling homage of man. He has in Christ shown us the clean Man; He has through Christ given us the means of cleansing ourselves, if we will take Him at His word. Baptism, of course, first of all, that first cleansing that saves us. And then penance—also of course, for we are thinking of taking Christ at His word.

It is a curious thing that of the Christians who never go to confession , probably half of them do not do it because it is too hard, and the other half because it is too easy. Truly it would require an omnipotent Deity to provide the denizens of earth with a satisfactory religion! Of course there are some who simply never think about it at all, and some who don't care; but the majority are about evenly divided as we have noted.

And God's answer is ready for both. To those who think it is too hard, He displays His Cross in mute appeal; to the others, He says, "To be sure, it is easy, but if you were left to do the job by yourself, could you do it? And, grating that it is an easy way of shelving responsbility for sin, are you certain that it is so very easy, after all?" An earnest, sincere confession is never easy; one that is not earnest and sincere does not avail to the purpose - - - cleansing.

No man can truly cleanse his own soul. God alone can cleanse no man's soul. When the man, from the depths of his heart, has cried "Water from the side of Christ, wash me!" then the process has begun.

V.

Passion of Christ, Strengthen Me.

1

Melodrama, and especially that form of melodrama which exerts so powerful an influence upon the modern mind—the cinema—has given us a wholly wrong conception of the meaning of passion. We have been led to associate it with the idea of violent emotion, especially sexual emotion. It would be too much to say that the word will not bear this interpretation, but it is certainly true that the original meaning is better suggested to us by the adjective "passive," derived from the same root. Passion is essentially passiveness, suffering another force to preponderate. The popular idea is really true, for it means that a person is allowing, or suffering, some powerful emotion or instinct to dominate him; the error lies in the common mistake that a man is showing his own strength when in reality he has surrendered himself utterly to a brutal instinct within him. The gallery thinks weakness is strength. Sometimes the gallery is wiser than we think.

For we have it on St. Paul's testimony that our Lord said to him, "My strength is made perfect in weakness." In more ways than one His words have proved themselves true.

We must not think of the Passion of Christ as consisting simply of His crucifixion, or even of the sufferings which immediately preceded that grim consummation of His natural life. His first recorded words, if we except those spoken in childhood, were, "Suffer it to be so now, for thus it becometh us to fulfill all righteousness." The idea of submission was there. The sermon on the Mount breathes the spirit of non-resistance, of suffering, of passion. And of our Lord even His enemies say that His life bore out His teachings.

The Passion of Christ, then, is His heroic submission to His Father's will. It was not a policy of taking anything that comes along, or letting things abide as they are; it was and is a policy of active passivity, if we may allow ourselves the paradoxical expression, a strong, steadfast, unflinching submission to that which He knew to be best and greatest.

From such a source, then, the Christian is to derive his strength. "Passion of Christ, strengthen me!"—that is to say, may I, like my Master, submit myself to the only true source of strength, the Will of God. Strength lies in submission, in weakness; but it must be submission to the right thing.

At this point, merely to avoid drawing a false inference, we must consider the relation of the Gospel of non-resistance to the doctrines of Pacifism. Many people say that if it is my duty as an individual to practice non-resistance, it must be the duty of my nation as a whole to do the same thing. If I take my complaints to a court to have them settled, it must be right to have a World Court to settle international complaints.

Of course, the difficulty lies in the fact that an individual is not a group, and never yet has a group acted like an individual, or an individual like a group. Mob-psychology is something we begin to understand; Mark Antony, if Shakespeare is to be credited, was a consummate artist in the realms of that science. But mob-psychology and group psychology have more in common with each other than either one has with individual-psychology. The mob is merely one phase of the group. Years ago duelling was done away with in civilized countries as a means of settling private quarrels. If the individual and the group were governed by the same natural laws, war would undoubtedly have gone out with the duel. But it did not, and it probably will not until we have learned a good deal more about the forces that actuate a group as distinguished from an individual.

The Christian religion has to do with both individuals and groups. Each group, or community, has its right relationship to other groups, or communities. And non-resistance certainly has its place in that relationship.

No greater problem faces the world of today than that of laying foundations for a world peace which shall endure. The causes of war are many; a few which come to mind at once are national expansion, commercial greed, the lust of Empire, hatred and suspicion, racial prejudice.

The ideal Christian state can and must be built up all over the world if the next war is to be avoided. That means a world league of communities, each of which is free and independent and lacking both the desire and need of war. The existence of a "Big Four" or a "Big Three" as rivals for the unique place of the "Big One" is not a sight to inspire one with confidence for the peace, and hence the civilization, of the future. A city that is not the City of God is a menace to the world. The Christian

group, like the Christian individuals of which it is composed, must draw its strength from the passion, the non-resistance to God's Grace which alone can keep it standing.

I have just returned from a pilgrimage to the Holy City, Jerusalem, the "Vision of Peace" which has inspired so many lives. The message it gave to me was a vision of the peace of the future, founded on a world league of free and autonomous cities. Leaders in the capitals of the world have stated that another war like the last one will mean the death of civilization on this planet, possibly the extinction of all life, but certainly at least the succession of a Dark Age worse than that which followed the dissolution of the Roman Empire. It is for Christians to foresee the dissolution of our Empires, and to make it peaceful, through developing each city or community into the City of God, bound in fellowship one with another.

We have yet to realize how the Passion of Christ was related to His patriotism—a patriotism which made Him burn with love not for the Empire but for the City of Sion's Hill. For a moment let us reconstruct the conditions which prevailed in the Temple at the time of the triumphal entry that Palm Sunday. A peasant from Galilee has come up to Jerusalem to offer a sacrifice; he has brought a kid from the flock; he also wishes to pay his Temple tax.

He approaches the priest, with his oblation. The animal is declared unclean, unfit for sacrifice to the Most Holy. A blemish is charged, and although the peasant cannot see it, he has no redress. What shall he do? Go to the people who sell animals for sacrifice; pay ten or twenty times the price, have the new animal declared suitable, and so make his sacrifice. To pay his Temple tax he has brought the only money current, Roman coins. He takes it to the money-changer, for only the ancient Palestinian coins may be offered, and the priests and money-changers have secured every bit that remained in circulation. Again he must pay exorbitantly, and so make his remittance. That is why our Lord, when He directed St. Peter to pay the Temple tax, had the Disciple catch a fish, and find a coin in its mouth. The miracle was not a vulgar exhibition of His power, nor prompted by penury, but was a ringing cry of protest against the rotten system prevailing.

Into such a condition He comes, the multitude with Him, bearing palm branches. Making a cord scourge, he cleanses the Temple.

Word is brought to the priests. They have stood his epithets, they have suffered his attacks, but now he has broken down their graft. This is too much! The seclusion in Bethany, until the

Last Supper and the Sacrifice of the New Law were finished, the betrayal, the mock-trial, and the Crucifixion—these flowed quickly one upon the other, as a result of the love of our Lord for His people in the Holy City. May that Passion which He endured arouse us to the building of the City of God in our midst! Then we shall have a real strength, a real comfort, from the Passion of Christ.

3

So long as human nature is not violently changed, there will always be some whose idea of religion is incompatible with their idea of comfort. To be truly pious and devout, to these minds, is to be exquisitely uncomfortable.

While it would be rash to hold that comfort and religion go hand in hand—for this would be seized upon by the glutton and the sloth—still it must be maintained that our Lord intended to raise rather than lower the sum total of human comfort and happiness.

The prayer to which we are devoting our attention has a thought for us in this connection which is lost in the English translation. "Passio Christi, conforta me." To the average mind, "strengthen" and "comfort" do not immediately suggest themselves as synonyms. Yet, when we give the matter some thought, the only real comfort is derived from a source of strength. The mother can comfort her child because she can strengthen it. Even the athlete or pugilist may seek comfort from another—he seeks a strength which he himself lacks.

Religion is intended to comfort us. It does so not through a delusion, but through a reality—the Passion of Christ. "The most comfortable sacrament" is an expression which we often meet in the writings of spiritual leaders of a day gone by. Would that the meaning of the phrase could be brought home to our generation! The Sacrament which comforts, which quiets us and sets us at our ease because it strengthens us through the Passion of Christ. It is by no means an easy or simple thing, but its effect certainly is the "strengthening and refreshing of our souls by the Body of Christ"—that Body that suffered for us.

VI.

O Good Jesus, Hear Me.

1

The Church has never encouraged the development of beauty for its own sake. Therefore, although some of the greatest works of art which civilization boasts owe their inspiration to the religion of Christ, these have always been regarded as means rather than ends. If architecture in Church buildings were not symbolic, it is doubtful whether that branch of are would ever have developed as it has.

To the eye of one who is no expert in these matters, two types of Christian architecture are readily differentiated; the Romanesque and the Gothic. That the latter is a development of the former is interesting only in an academic way; the massive walls and round domes and arches of the Romanesque seem to us one type, the delicate tracery, high spires and finials, and pointed arches of the Gothic, another.

Each has its contribution to the lore of Christian symbolism, and while we might deprecate a builder's attempt to combine the characteristic features of each, in the Christian life, the aspects of religion symbolized by each must be combined.

2

The low ceilings, the round arches speak to us of the nearness of God. "The Word was made flesh and dwelt among us"—"tabernacled with us," it might be translated. God is ever near at hand, He dwells in our midst, and the Romanesque church teaches us this truth. Yet, carried to its logical extreme, this phase of the religious life, taken by itself, will plunge us into sad error.

To the "Romanesque" man, such thoughts as these come natural: "God is near; He is watching over me night and day with loving care. There is nothing I can do to bring Him nearer or increase His love for me. He is my Creator and Redeemer;

it is inconceivable that He who created me and redeemed me would let me perish. Why fill the air with lamentations for my sins, or afflict the body He has given me with cruel penances? He knows my every want, why besiege Him with constant petitions?" And so the life of prayer and the power of the sacraments is lost.

The trouble with this type of person is not that he is wicked, but rather unbalanced. He sees only the doting Fatherhood of God, and fails to appreciate the joy of sonship. If he is himself the father of a blasé and indifferent son who knows not the happiness of snuggling up to a loving parent, he may in time come to see the emptiness of his own attitude toward God.

3

On the other hand, the dainty vertical lines and pointed work of the Gothic school of architecture speaks to us of the soul's aspirations heavenward. Men who would everywhere see paganism in Christian customs, find in the Gothic arch and tracery a relic of the time when the overhanging boughs of forest trees were man's temple for the worship of his gods. The history of the original purpose of the pointed arch, allowing, as it did, a narrow opening for a window in the colder regions of the north of Europe, seems to dispose of this superstition; nevertheless the idea suggested by the Church's enemies is not a bad one. The vault of a great cathedral is not unlike the virgin forest, ever seeking things heavenly, ever crying, "Excelsior!"

But, like the other, this aspect of religion may become unbalanced. The "Gothic" soul may develop aspiration for its own sake. "What matters it if I am heard; the lifting up of the soul is in itself invaluable. Religion, worship—these have a real meaning apart from any consideration of the objective reality of God. The Universe is ever evolving towards higher things; as I strive to lift myself, I come in tune with the Universe, or God, whichever you chose to name it."

Persons thinking such thoughts really exist, and although they may appear to us to be playing a sort of game of make-believe, they are the natural development of the idea of the Gothic, unbalanced by the idea by the Romanesque.

4

"O Good Jesu, Hear me!" Is not this aspiration the solution, the proper combination of the two aspects of Religion? The cry is uttered to One in heaven—it is an aspiration in three short words; the petition implies One within ear-shot, one who is near, one who tabernacles with us.

VII.

Within Thy Wounds Hide Me.

1

The great theologians of the Thirteenth Century never wearied of insisting that the sacraments of the Church derive their merit from the wounds of Christ. Indeed, it is easy to see how, denying this premise, Protestantism has virtually rejected the sacraments altogether, regarding them as purely carnal and external, if not positively superstitious and intrinsically evil. But once the connection is admitted—once it is seen that the wounded Side of Christ has spiritually extended itself into time and space, it becomes not only possible but highly reasonable and most comforting for us nearly two thousand years after His passion, to ask Him to hide us in His wounds. It means that we are asking Him to allow us to live close to Him through the means which we call sacraments.

The sacramental life is at once a difficult and an easy thing; it is at once simple and involved.

It is difficult because we live among so many people to whom considerations like these mean little or nothing; and the strongest man is influenced greatly by the sentiment of the people among whom he lives—we call it "public opinion." It is easy because God does so much and asks so little.

It is simple because the consecration of the will is really the only necessary thing—all the rest flows from that: "If thine eye be single thy whole body shall be full of light." It is involved because a human is so complex a thing. A certain author describes one of his characters as "not so much a human being as a civil war." The expression is apt; the phenomenon all too common. Who of us has not felt like a civil war, one in which no armistice seems possible?

2

There are so many sad misconceptions of the sacraments that one scarcely wonders at the smallness of the Church's victory in

the world. The Holy Communion is regarded as a sort of symbolic passion-play; or even in some places as a public advertisement of the communicant's good standing in his community, so that to deny the sacrament would be virtually defamation of character. Holy Baptism is regarded as an excuse for a party; Holy Matrimony as a matter of biological interest. And so it goes. Almost the rarest conception of the purpose of the sacraments is the true one—that they are intended to further the union of the soul with God.

Yes, mysticism, if you like. But in a very broad sense. If mysticism means union with the Infinite, then the sacramental life is at once the easiest and surest mystical method. Perfectly, though perhaps not sensibly, united to God in Baptism; freed from sin in Absolution, nourished by the Divine Essence in Holy Communion, fortified in Confirmation, knit to another for the furtherance of God's Glory and His Kingdom in Holy Matrimony, Consecrated to the sacrificing priesthood in Holy Order, and "raised up" in Extreme Unction—all this is for one simple end: to bring the soul into union with God.

Empty forms can do no such thing, be they accompanied by all the auto-hypnotism in the world. It is only because the sacraments flow from the Wounds of Christ.

3

Mysticism is essentially a hidden thing. When the Saint cried, "Within thy Wounds hide me," and when the poet wrote "Rock of Ages, cleft for me; Let me hide myself in Thee," they were both conscious of this element.

So the sacramental life, while in a sense it cannot be hid, like the city set on a hill, for men will take knowledge of those who have been with Jesus, must be a quiet, modest, unostentatious and mysterious thing transcending definition or description, incapable of scientific classification and nomenclature. "Your life is hid with Christ in God."

VIII.

Suffer me not to be Separated from Thee.

1

There is only one thing which can separate the soul from God —sin.

Mysticism is the union of the soul with God; sin is the separation of the soul from God. But although there has been of late years a greatly increased interest in mysticism, it cannot be said that there has been a corresponding revival of interest in the subject of sin. To the average mind, sin is the violation, more or less serious, of some convention. The human race has come to the conclusion that there would be greater happiness in a world wherein human life was respected than in one in which man-slaughter was reckoned as an agreeable pastime for the idle rich. Therefore murder is a violation of this convention—a sin. So is the failure to remove your hat, or the practice of eating with a knife. The average mind distinguishes murder from uncouthness as different degrees of offence rather than different kinds of offence.

But if there is a God, and He is a good God, then He must be interested, to some extent, in man, and must not only have a Will for man, but must have made that Will known, in some way.

If the Christian Religion is true, there can remain no reasonable sort of doubt about the will of God for man. It is the violation of this known will of God which constitutes sin in the sense that Christians know the word. The seriousness of the sin lies not only in the enormity of the deed considered in itself, but also (and perhaps chiefly) in the knowledge or lack of knowledge on the part of the sinner, of the will of God. It may safely be said that a person who knows nothing of the will of God is incapable of committing sin. He may be a very unpleasant person to have around, and courts of justice may be right in locking him up or even executing him, but if he is truly ignorant of God's will, he has not sinned. On the other hand, the theologian, who is supposed to be learned in such matters, would ordinarily have a hard time avoiding sin. He could make so few excuses about not knowing. I think that is why, as a general rule, theologians

are priests. They need the grace of the priesthood to keep them straight.

2

Sin, then, is the result of a clash of wills—ours and God's.

Every business man and every housewife knows the result of a clash of wills. When Mr. Salesman and Mr. Manager disagree, they perhaps talk it over. Then one of two things happen: either one of the gentlemen changes his mind, or else there is a dissolution, and Mr. Salesman seeks another position. When Mrs. Homemaker and her cook have a difference of opinion as to plans for the running of the culinary department of the home, there may be an argument, or there may be a dismissal—all depending upon the tempers of the principals. In any event ,things come out as in the other situation: either one of the disputants changes her mind, or there comes a parting of the ways. "Can two walk together, except they be agreed?" A clash of wills means a separation.

And that is what we mean by saying that sin separates us from God. We can hold nothing back from our oblation of ourselves to Him; there can be no reservations without ruining the spirit of the offering. Either we are His and He is ours—the mystical union—or else we go our way and He goes His.

3

After all, when we consider the great latitude allowed us, the prospect of living in subjection to God's will is far from terrifying. The Ten Commandments with their "Thou-shalt-nots" are as nothing in comparison with the countless billions of permissions with their "Thou-mayests." It isn't as if God forced all men of every temperament into a single mold or course of conduct. It isn't a sin to live in the woods or in the city, we may be plumber or ploughman or sculptor as our desires and talents dictate. We may marry or remain celibate, we may collect stamps or raise dahlias. Only we may not take another man's house (city or country), we may not elect the vocation of highwayman, or live with another man's wife or collect other men's stamps. Life is full of thrills and fun for the strictest adherent to the moral code, and the little girl's epigram "Everything that's nice is naughty," was based on a wrong perspective.

4

To the modern mind Hell is an unthinkable thing. Some form of Universalism—a purely negative element—is trying to make its way into the Church. We hear much about modern science

clearing up the superstition about infernal regions below the earth's surface, and the new theology having banished a God who could condemn his own children to everlasting fire and derive amusement from the pastime—perhaps it should be called "pass-eternity."

Personally, I have never met a scientist who knew *what* the center of the earth was like. Many had theories, but none had knowledge. However, that has nothing to do with the question, which deals not with geology but with the idea of separation from God. If it is possible to drive God from our hearts by sin (and who has not known the experience?) it is possible that such a condition of the soul may continue beyond this life.

It is not likely that the transition from this life to the next means an absolute reversal of the laws which are seen now to govern us. Especially is this true in spiritual matters. Accordingly, if we live a life which is definitely, though perhaps feebly, a journey Godwards, it is not unreasonable to suppose that that journey will continue. On the other hand, if the clash of our will against God's will is ever on the increase during life, and nothing has changed us at the moment of death, it is just as reasonable to suppose that that journey, also, will continue. Hell is simply the continuance of the state of sin—separation from God. The presence or absence of brimstone is quite immaterial, for the mental anguish of knowing that one has defiantly walked away from, rather than towards, his Eternal Father would make the physical torment comparatively non-existent.

And if the idea of a God who condemns his own children to the flames is repellant and unbelievable, what shall we say of a God who takes his wayward son by the neck, so to speak, and says, "Whether you will or no, you must abide forever with Me."? I have heard that in some countries a murderer is bound by chains to the body of his victim. How much more cruel would be the action of a God who would sentence a sinner to remain bound forever to Him Whom by his sins he has crucified, to gaze throughout eternity on Him Whom he has pierced. Beside such torment, the hell of separation, where at least the sinner can bow his head for shame, would be a paradise.

Heaven and hell are not, then, arbitrary distinctions; they are not places to which we are sent as reward or punishment for our deeds here in life. Rather they are the normal continuation, in the life after death, of the life we tried to live this side of death. "Suffer me not to be separated from Thee" is a prayer for deliverance from sin in life and from hell in death.

IX.

From the Malicious Enemy Defend Me.

1

Scientists tell us that the custom attributed to the ostrich of hiding his head in the sand at the approach of an enemy is purely mythical, no more credible than the self-immolation of the fabled phœnix-bird or the flame-defying antics of the salamander. They have not, however, explained fully how this trait which we once thought characteristic of the ostrich has been transferred to mankind, showing itself in the widespread denial of the existence of the devil.

In olden times men recognized the reality of this enemy of the soul, and either fled from him or warded off his attacks by appealing to a higher Power. Today, however, the intellectual fear-nothing knows himself to be secure from any diabolical attack, because he has safely covered up his well-educated head with the sands of denial. Having once assured ourselves that there is no devil, that individual cannot, of course, harm us.

By the evolutionary process known as "natural selection," we have had explained to us how it is that certain types of animal have endured while others have been annihilated. "Protective colouring" is said not to be the careful planning of a benign providence, but purely the result of the natural course of events: the rabbits which were not colored to resemble the earth were all eaten by foxes, the tree-toads which could not hide themselves by "freezing" against the bark of a tree were picked and eaten by hungry hawks, and did not propagate their species. So it is perfectly natural to assume that, if the ostrich had actually done as he was said to do, his kind would have been exterminated many centuries before the rise of civilization. And by the same token it is easily seen how the ostrich-trick adopted by humans has resulted in the extermination of a generation of people who believed in the reality of spiritual things. For the pretence that there is no devil has given the enemy the opportunity of his life; he has approached unseen and unheard upon his quarry, and devoured their spiritual lives.

2

Except for the fact that the situation is one highly desired by the Arch-fiend, it is difficult to explain how it ever came about. We have just learned the art of camouflage—it began when we first put our soldiers into olive-drab instead of blue, and it grew wonderfully during the World War—but the devil had his first successful application of the thing when he persuaded the materialists of the eighteenth century to deny his existence. We thought we were doing well when we made the enemy think a small boat was a pair of tugs, or a cannon was part of a grapevine, but he has succeeded in making a large portion of his enemy —mankind—not merely wonder where he is or doubt his intentions, but deny his very being. And it is not likely that mankind, under such disadvantage, should make extraordinary progress in the battle. We laugh at the idea of Don Quixote jousting with wind-mills, but far more ludicrous, were it no so sad, is the spectacle of humanity making no effort to defend itself against the most malicious of foes.

We know from actual experience that it is possible for man to oppose God. We know that we have sinned; perhaps we have even gone so far as to determine to live a deliberate life of rebellion against God. If we haven't done it ourselves, we have found others who are in, or near, such a case. Why, then, should it be incredible that a spiritual being should likewise rebel against Him? Why should we think it a myth when we are told that a spiritual being has done and is doing what we know material beings are constantly doing?

3

"Misery loves company," and the more miserable it is the more it seeks companionship. Why is it that the boy who has learned vice becomes at once the preceptor of some innocent lad? Why does the confirmed gambler continually initiate green-horns into his fraternity? Why is it that, among a certain class of drinkers, it is considered a disgrace to drink alone, while to get drunk on a party is something glorious? The proverb does not answer our questions, it merely states the fact: "Misery loves company." From our own observation of life we know the fact for a fact, yet when it is asserted that the devil does pretty much what men do, we hear cries of incredulity.

Yet that is just what the Church has always held about the devil: that he is a malign spirit, who, having rebelled against God and striven in vain to set himself up as a rival power, now knows no delight save that of increasing the number of his followers. His attacks have this one aim.

Furthermore, both experience and common sense teach us that temptation is to be looked for just in proportion as we are making an effort to live a Christian life. The devil has no need of interesting himself in people who neither think nor care about God. Those who are carried away by their own self-will and spiritual pride, too, he may regard as safely landed and not worth troubling himself about. This is why certain phases of popular mysticism are so powerfully dangerous. On the contrary, many who are earnestly seeking to find God and to live in accordance with His will, are discouraged, because, as they say, "The more I try the harder it seems." They are perfectly right. The more we try the harder it is bound to be, because no warfare ever grew easier in proportion as the enemy exerted his force. And the Malicious Enemy is just as determined that you shall not attain your goal as you are that you shall.

The determining factor in this warfare lies outside of the contestants. "From the malicious enemy defend me!"—God is not only interested in the fight, but stands ready to intervene. He will and does defend. He does not take away temptation, nor will He immediately thrust into hell Satan and all the evil spirits who roam through the world seeking the destruction of souls, but He will not suffer us to be tempted above that we are (with His grace) able.

X.

In the Hour of My Death Call Me.

1

The fear of death is a phase of the desire to live, which is one of the most powerful motives of human action. When Christianity has conquered the fear of death it has accomplished a miracle beside which the Feeding of the Five Thousand and the Raising of Lazarus pale into insignificance. And it does conquer in many instances; it should in all. For if we truly believe what we profess, then death is but the transition from one state of life to another. It is in no sense the end of life; not even for the damned, because they had no life in them even while they walked the earth, else they would not be damned. To him who has found God, who has earnestly prayed, "Suffer me not to be separated from Thee," the hour of death has no suggestion of fear.

But this does not in any way imply that the moment of death is not the most momentous of a Christian's life. It is the last opportunity for the exercise of that gift of free will which enables a man to become God-like or devil-like according to his own choice. It is the moment when one who has lived with God all his days may conceivably say, "I have been a fool to throw away my life; I would I had done otherwise;" or when one who has sunk to the very depths of moral degradation may yet lift his eyes to the hills and cheat hell of its prey.

Naturally, then, it is the moment when the assaults of the adversary will be most powerful; consequently it is the moment when the grace of God is most sorely needed. And, running true to form, the Modern Mind will not have it so. It treats a man's last living hour as sacred, to be sure, but sacred, not to God, but to earth and the things of earth. A soldier, even in war-time if possible, may get leave to see a dying parent; we are ready to turn everything upside down for the sake of providing some little worldly comfort for the sufferer, but to call the priest?—No, that would frighten and depress the patient. Time enough for the priest after the undertaker has done his work. Once the soul has fled, the priest may work his will upon the lifeless corpse, he may

sprinkle holy water and say innumerable prayers—but the eternal destiny of the departed is already determined.

2

Because the lawfulness of reserving the Blessed Sacrament has been called in question among us of the Anglican Communion, the researches of scholars into the primitive practice have been most careful, and, as a result, exceedingly interesting and helpful. They have brought to light the fact, little realized among us, that the early Christians held most strongly the importance of death-bed communion. It was with this idea in view that reservation in some form or other was made virtually universal in the primitive church. And when we consider the absence of church buildings, the danger of suspicion in times of persecution, the countless inherent difficulties of administration, we can realize, to some extent, how vital they considered the matter. Of course, it is possible that those who received the Christian tradition directly from the Apostles were wrong about this, and that the materialism of recent generations has taught us better things; possible, but highly improbable. The hour of my death remains to me above all times the hour when I would hear my Lord call me.

XI.

And Bid Me Come to Thee.

1

A superficial reading of the Prayer upon which we are basing these considerations might lead one to think that the verse, "And bid me come to Thee" gives confirmation to the widely-held Protestant idea of a direct migration to Heaven in the article of death; an idea which was popular in the last century and made vivid to many by the scene in "Uncle Tom's Cabin" where "Little Eva" went up to heaven by means of inadequately concealed wires, and is reflected in the recent statement of a minister of the Gospel who avers that he personally saw angels raising his wife towards the regions of the Blessed.

But the word "come" does not necessarily denote an action which is performed in the twinkling of an eye. Rather it denotes a process. It may even involve the undertaking of a perilous and painful journey, as when St. Peter, seeing a Figure on the waves of the Galilean Sea, said, "Lord, if it be thou, bid me come to thee on the water," and having heard the word, "Come," impetuously obeyed the summons. Or as when the Beloved Disciple laid down a weary pen, having written, "Even so come, Lord Jesus. Amen."

2

Purgatory is, to many minds, a gruesome word; but when we think of it as the last journey to our Lord, it becomes transfigured. We applaud the Arabian who goes through fierce fires to obtain the magic casket, while we shrink from the contemplation of spiritual fires of cleansing which shall prepare us for the Beatific Vision. Hell and purgatory are sometimes thoughtlessly used as synonyms; in reality they are antonyms. Hell means despair, purgatory means hope; hell means separation from God, purgatory means drawing nearer to God; hell is everlasting, purgatory is by its very nature and purpose transitory, preparatory. A woman, one of the greatest spiritual guides the Church has produced, wrote that she could conceive of no bliss save that of heaven itself which could approach that of the holy souls in purgatory.

XII.

That with Thy Saints I May Praise Thee, Forever and Ever.

1

The most sublime things are the most easily made fun of. It is not surprising, then, that one can hardly ever pick up a humorous magazine or look through the joke-pages of our dailies without coming across some sort of witticism based upon the idea of a literal heaven where sickly-looking souls in long white garments, with their halos and wings and harps, drag through a wearisome eternity even less attractive than the Hades of pagan mythology. The introduction, in these presentations, of some worldly and therefore incongruous feature such as a derby hat or a cigar is sufficient to amuse the injudicious.

It is hardly necessary to say in a serious discourse that such a conception is not inherent in the Christian scheme of eschatology. St. John had to employ such figures as pearly gates and white robes to give his readers some idea of the state of the Blessed, just as his Lord and ours had used the figures of a repentant son, a thrifty housewife, a farmer, a merchant, to teach other truths to His disciples. But in St. John's description one feature alone is enough to make the cleavage between the Christian and the pagan ideas of the future life patent. Never does he show us the souls of the Saints lying around, purposeless, without interest. They are always active. We cannot perfectly understand the nature of their activity, to be sure; it would be difficult, for example, to picture to ourselves the Elders perpetually casting their crowns at the feet of their Lord. A little boy once suggested that they must have strings on the crowns, to draw them back, and recast them. The gesture described is a symbol of an attitude of the soul: "Not unto us, Lord, not unto us, but to thy Name be the praise." All the honor and glory which the Saints have achieved on earth by their sufferings and their holiness they lay at our Lord's feet. Heaven is a place of spiritual activity; a place where souls are actively engaged in rendering to God that which is His due.

But this Godward phase of heaven's activity is only the half of the story. The golden phials of incense which the Saints offer before God are full of odors which are the prayers of the saints still on earth. While it is true that Jesus Christ is "our only Mediator and Advocate" when it is a question of redemption from sin, at the same time it is equally true that all life, that of this world and that of heaven, is inextricably involved in a never-ending network of mediators, and in no case is this more true than in our relationship with the Saints in heaven. So far from merely resting from their labors, they have been freed from other considerations that they may better increase their labors, and, with hearts and minds purified, they engage continually in intercession on our behalf.

The difficulty of expressing the whole idea is partly due to our imperfect apprehension of it and even more to the inadequacy of human words to convey heavenly concepts.

3

In these days when so much is thought and said about efficiency, how few people there are who think of heaven in terms of efficiency! It certainly is, granting the Christian hypothesis, the highest point of human efficiency, because it is puting human endeavor in the position where it can accomplish the most for the longest time. "That with thy Saints I may praise Thee forever and ever" is the petition which begs for the suppliant the grace to be allowed to put his forces to the best possible use. Hell is uselessness throughout eternity, because it is eternal out-of-jointness with God's plan for the universe; heaven is usefulness throughout eternity, because it is co-operation with the Divine Mind, Divine Force, Divine Love, forever.

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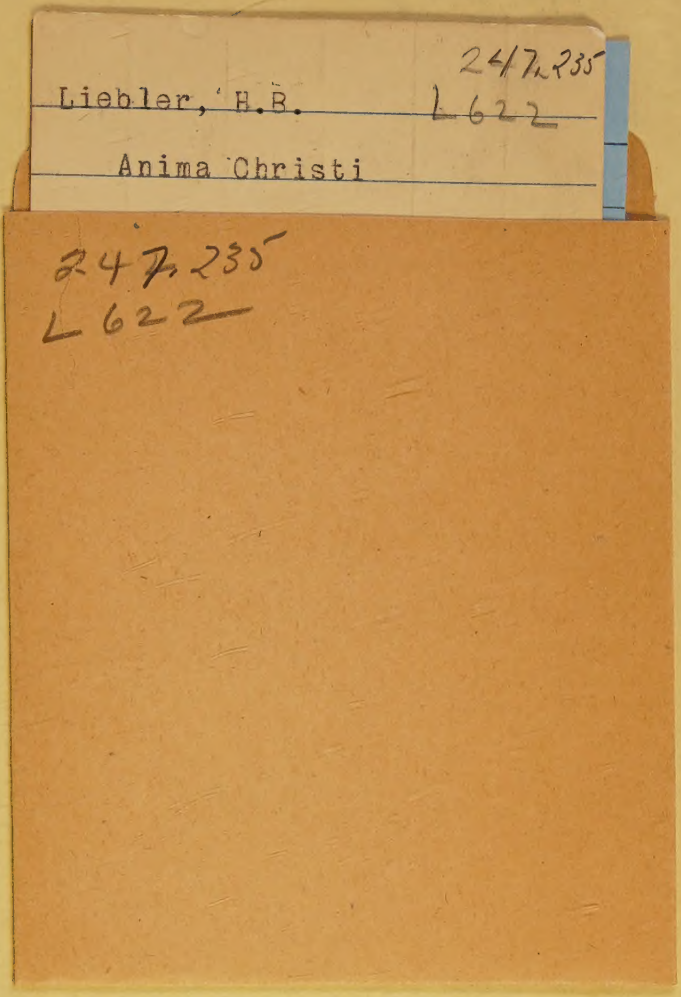
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